

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny

Exemption(s): \_\_\_\_\_

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Date \_\_\_\_\_ Declassify on \_\_\_\_\_ Reason \_\_\_\_\_

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FADRC

2007

February 28, 1980

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Dear Mr. Harris:

Thank you for your inquiry of February 13 concerning the human rights situation in Argentina, and in particular the disappearance of Jews in that country.

We remain deeply concerned over violations of basic human rights in Argentina. While the level of violations diminished last year, serious problems still remain.

The most fully documented compilation of disappearances contains the names of 6,500 persons whose whereabouts are unknown. Disappearances continue, although the rate of disappearances has fallen off from several thousand in 1976 to approximately 40 for January-November 1979. There are still reports of torture being used during the interrogation process. The right of option program, allowing prisoners to leave Argentina for other countries, has been slowed by Argentine bureaucratic procedures. Some improvements have been noted, however, in judicial autonomy and prison conditions, and the number of political prisoners held under state-of-siege provision has been reduced from 3,500 in 1978 to approximately 1,300 as of December 1979. The 1979 human rights report, submitted to the Congress in January, contains a full and balanced account of the human rights situation.

As a result of Argentina's human rights record, it has been United States policy to oppose loans to Argentina in the multilateral banks which do not satisfy basic human needs criteria. The Kennedy-Humphrey Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act proscribes our supplier role for equipment and training to the Argentine Armed Forces. Further actions toward Argentina will be consistent with this policy and legislation until there is a return to respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Some of the victims of these human rights violations have been Jewish and we have discussed with Argentine officials reports of anti-Semitism in that country.

The Honorable

Herbert E. Harris,

House of Representatives.

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When Secretary Vance was in Argentina in November 1977 the question was discussed. Our Ambassador in Buenos Aires continues to stress to the Argentine Government our concern over these reports, as well as the cases of individual Jews. Officials in the Argentine Government have responded that they are strenuously opposed to anti-Semitism, that it is certainly not Argentine Government policy, and that specific legislation has been passed which makes inciting racial hatred or violence a punishable offense.

The United States Government remains deeply concerned about the question of religious freedom for all religious groups in Argentina, and we will continue to express this concern to all appropriate levels of the Government of Argentina. As requested, enclosed please find a copy of the Argentine Human Rights Report for 1979.

Sincerely,

*Handwritten initials*

J. Brian Atwood  
Assistant Secretary  
for Congressional Relations

Enclosure:  
As stated.

Drafted: ARA/ECA:GJWhitman:mas  
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Clearances: ARA/ECA:CWRuser  
ARA:RKohn  
HA:PFlood (subs)  
H:ETaylor

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